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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001697

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR GOLDBERGER/SACHAR; PRM
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/29/2013

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [EFIN](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#)

SUBJECT: GAZA PUBLIC SECTOR STRIKE EXTENDED TO 9/16

REF: JERUSALEM 1644

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Gaza public sector labor strike has been extended to at least September 16, according to union leaders. Participation rates are 80 percent among teachers and around 40 percent among health care workers. PA contacts said that the Hamas-led government has reacted by jailing some 1,000 teachers and health care workers. Hamas also reportedly hired some 4,000 replacement teachers since the strike began August 30. Hamas forces have obliged hundreds of employees to go to work and employed groups of children to stone the homes of doctors who remain on strike. End summary.

Participation numbers down from last week

¶2. (C) Secretary General of the Teachers' Union Jamil Shihadah told Econoff on September 10 that the labor strike will continue until at least September 16. He said that 80 percent of Gaza's 10,000 public sector teachers continue to strike (down from 90 percent participation last week), as public sector employees protest Hamas's violent and discriminatory policies against non-Hamas-affiliated teachers. (Note: UN contacts said on September 10 that around 60 percent of public sector teachers in Gaza remain on strike. End note.) Shihadah said that Hamas security forces have jailed approximately 1,000 teachers and health care workers since the strike began.

Hamas hires 4,000 replacement teachers

¶3. (C) UN OCHA Gaza representative Hamada al-Bayari told Econoff on September 10 that the Hamas-led government has hired 4,000 new, replacement teachers since August 30. He said that Hamas "plans to replace each teacher" who goes strike, noting that the majority of new hires are unqualified.

¶4. (C) Shihadah confirmed that the Hamas-led government replaced most of the teachers on strike with unqualified individuals, many of whom have little formal education - most have not even completed secondary school. He alleged that a teacher in Gaza City began writing English script from right to left (like Arabic), unaware of the left-to-right English structural flow. He reiterated that the strike continues to expose and undercut the Hamas leadership's intention to "lead Gazans down the road of an Islamic state rule by Hamas's iron fist."

Kids hired to harass doctors on strike

¶5. (C) PA Deputy Minister of Health Anan Masri told Econoff

on September 10 that Hamas gunmen have entered the homes of doctors- many of them U.S.-trained -literally pushing them from their living rooms to their places of work. He said that Hamas has recruited children to stone the houses of those doctors on strike, instructing the children to loudly chant against participation in the "anti-Islamic, anti-Palestine" strike. UN contacts said that 35 percent of Gaza hospital employees and 50 percent of health clinic employees remain on strike.

16. (C) OCHA representative al-Bayari said that most people in Gaza approve of Hamas's response to those doctors on strike because physicians cannot be replaced like the teachers have been. "Most doctors on strike are relieved when Hamas forces arrive at their home, as everyone will know they had been forced to break the strike," he said.
WALLES